

## **The Golden Thread of God's Love**

Theme: God has covenanted himself with the human family. His love is everlasting.

A long, long time ago God decided to create a universe. The creation of the universe and of **human beings in particular** demonstrate God's eternal love for every person. Made in the image and likeness of God, humans are sent to **populate the earth, care for each other, and to care for creation**. The **golden thread of God's love** is found in the Word of God, the **Bible**, and the **Word made flesh** in Jesus Christ. We will celebrate that story this weekend in various ways.

The **Old Testament** (Hebrew Bible) records significant events of creation without any clear timeline, e.g. Adam and Eve; Cain and Abel; Noah – flood – covenant - **rainbow**. God's interaction with his creatures takes a momentous step forward in the call of **Abraham and Sarah**. (Genesis 12) Beginning with them, we will look at some **giants of the Old Testament** that reveal to us the **golden thread of God's love**.

### **Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 12f)**

I What was the world like 1800 years before the coming of Jesus. We can only imagine how difficult it was. We know what it was **NOT** like. E.g. No electricity, no phones, no internet, no TVs, no cars, no refrigerators, no canned foods, no washers or dryers, no showers, no super markets, no post offices, no schools, etc. Very primitive. Tribes.

A In that environment, **God spoke to a man named Abram** (later called **Abraham**) in Haran (Syria) People lived off the land; had domestic animals; hunted and fished.

1 Abraham is venerated as a **man of faith by Jews, Christians and Muslims**. He has an encounter with God who tells him he will be the **father of a great nation**.

2 **God makes a covenant** with Abraham that he has not done with any other people. He tells Abraham and Sarah to migrate to a new territory which we know as the **Holy Land**.

B But an **unusual test of faith** is put upon Abraham. His only son is miraculously born to Sarah who is beyond child bearing age. **Abraham and Sarah cherished Isaac** and expected great things for him.

1 Suddenly one day Abraham believes God orders him **to sacrifice his only son, Issac**, as was customary in those days. (Child sacrifice to gods - Moloch.)

2 Abraham was **trusting God would rescind his order or revive his son**.

C **Abraham's surrender to God**, though misguided, finds great favor with God. His deep **faith** is rewarded. The **golden thread of God's love** continues in successive generations – Isaac, Jacob, **Joseph**. **Famine** brings Jacob and family to **Egypt**.

(We **exercise our faith** based on **promises of God**.)

**Moses (Exodus)**

II We now jump to about the year **1200 BC**. **Moses** was born in a Jewish household, but through God's protection he is raised by **Pharaoh's daughter**. Later in life he kills an Egyptian while defending a Jewish worker, so he flees to the **Sinai area**. Moses marries and settles down in Midian. One day **he witnesses a burning bush**.

A Moses approaches the **burning bush** and he is told to **take off his sandals**. This encounter with God changes the life of Moses, and the course of Jewish history. God tells Moses to **return to Egypt to set his people free. What??**

1 If we were told to do that **would we be afraid?** That's for sure. The **courage and obedience of Moses** sets a new course for the people of God.

B You recall the **10 plagues** that visit **Pharaoh** and the Egyptians when Pharaoh refuses to set the Jews free. The 10<sup>th</sup> plague occurs on the **Passover night**, when the angel of death passes over the Jewish families that have sprinkled the **blood of lambs on the doorposts**. The Egyptian first born of **humans and animals** are killed. **"Let my people go!"**

1 What a **decisive act by God** in human history. The Hebrews cross the **Red Sea** and head to Mt. Sinai. There Moses communes with God - receives the **10 Commandments**. The people make a **covenant with God**. Jews are transformed from a family of **12 tribes** into a **nation, a chosen people, who belong to God**.

C **The golden thread of God's love** continues. **Joshua** into the **Promised Land**.

1 Period of 12 Judges – (**courarage and obedience** in your lifetime. )

**David and Solomon (1 & 2 Samuel) 1000 BC**

III **The people of Israel** demanded to have a **king** like the small nations around them. God did not want this but he allowed **Samuel to anoint Saul** as the first king around 1030 BC? Saul was not up to the job and died in battle. David, **the shepherd boy turned warrior** after the duel with **Goliath**, is anointed king of Israel. For the most part he was a successful and well liked. The **Book of Psalms** is attributed to him.

A However, **David's great shame** is what happened **with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah**, who was a loyal soldier. David commits adultery with her and she conceives a child.

1 David plots to kill Uriah and succeeds. The **prophet Nathan** doesn't allow him to get away with it. You can read that story in the **2nd Book of Samuel**.

2 But in God's mercy, **David is forgiven** and restored to God's graces. (Ps. 51) And the child is destined to become the next king of Israel, **Solomon**.

3. **Solomon** enjoys tremendous gift of **wisdom**. **Reputation** grows. He extends the **territory** of Israel. He builds the **Temple in Jerusalem** which becomes the focal point of **Jewish worship and pride**. God is with them.

- We pray for the **gift of wisdom to build the kingdom of God** on earth.

**The history of Israel is complex for the next 1000 years. The prophets keep alive the hope for the coming of the Messiah. "Prepare the way of the Lord..."**

### **Mary and Joseph (Luke 1 & 2)**

We now jump to a small town in **Nazareth** where two people are planning to marry. One day the angel **Gabriel appears to Mary** and invites her to become the mother of the **Messiah**. At first she is confused, but she **surrenders to the will** of God. **Joseph** has a similar decision to make. Will he expose Mary because she is not carrying their child? How could Joseph turn against the woman he loves? An angel is sent to enlighten Joseph. The cooperation of Mary and Joseph **change the course of human history**.

A God chose that **time and place** to fulfill the Old Testament **promises of a Messiah**.

1 **Two lowly people** become the parents of the Messiah, who is the **Son of God**. They are mostly in the dark as to who Jesus is. But they fulfill their mission.

B The birth of Jesus brings the **presence of God** upon earth in a most beautiful way. The **golden thread of God's** love is manifested in the **Word made flesh**.

1 I visited the **Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem**. There is a place in the basement that is venerated as the birth place of Jesus. **Pilgrims** pause and pray a few moments in **silence**. We sang "Silent Night."

C **Shepherds and kings** were part of that first Christmas night. They were summoned to adore the infant King.

1 **Our group** visited a shepherd's cave and imagined the angels appearing to them, beckoning them to follow the star. It is **awesome** to consider the mighty works of God.

2 The **humility and obedience** of Mary and Joseph are the source of much grace.

## **Reflections**

We have traced the **golden thread of God's love** through the pages of the Hebrew Bible. It is a glorious history of God acting in the affairs of men. Many men and women, giants of their time, **surrendered to the call of God** and made a difference in the course of history. But there is also much **suffering and infidelity** on the part of God's people.

**Faith like Abraham and Sarah. Courage like Moses and David. Wisdom like Solomon. Obedience like Mary and Joseph.** Review **your sacred history**. What is the **golden thread of God's love** in your life? How has God **protected** and guided you? Who are the **significant people** of your life that **reveal God's love**?

**Spend a few minutes in reverence and awe. Presence of God in Word & Sacrament.**

**“Let All Mortal Flesh” – show slip to be filled out and brought to evening prayer.**